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SUBJECT: MOZAMBICAN NEWSPAPERS' REPRINTING OF DANISH
CARTOONS PROVOKES MUSLIM PROTEST

REF: MAPUTO 177

¶1. On Friday, February 17, the Mozambican independent weekly newspaper "Savana" reprinted eight of the 12 Danish cartoons that have sparked world furor. This provoked a demonstration outside the paper's Maputo office that afternoon, involving approximately 120 Muslims. For the past several weeks Muslim leaders have been urging their followers not to resort to violence, but some of the protesters did so - breaking flower planters and destroying a guard booth on the street. Muslim leaders managed to have the demonstrators disburse.

¶2. Government spokesperson Luis Covane, speaking on February 19, characterized the publication of the cartoons by Savanna as "unreasonable," given worldwide Muslim sensitivity to the issue. He underscored, however, the government's secular principles, as well as its commitment to religious freedom. Covane urged the Muslim community to behave in a way that would promote national stability and unity.

¶3. On February 19 Savana editor-in-chief Fernando Conclaves appeared on evening television and read a short apology. He insisted that no offense was intended in the reprinting of the cartoons, but that the decision was made to show Mozambicans what exactly had caused the global uproar. (Note: Some observers cynically believe that Savana made a calculated decision based on simple economics - the paper has been losing money for some time, and this would have been a way to sell more copy. Others maintain that Savana may have thought it would not be viewed as anti-Muslim since one of its featured columnists is Islamic theologian and Islamic Council leader Sheik Aminuddin Mohamed.)

¶4. According to the press, the Muslim community is now organizing a general boycott of Savana and calling for another demonstration outside the newspapers' office on Saturday, February 25.
La Lime